



[V I Lenin, 1870-1924](#)

## **National Democratic Revolution: Introduction**

The CU National Democratic Revolution (NDR) course will now be serialised on this channel.

The NDR is the product of a class alliance (unity-in-action) against an oppressor class. The clearest original statement of this theoretical principle was made by V I Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International (2CCI) in 1920, in his Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question. We will return to the 2CCI statement in due course.

In practice, the NDR works to extend democracy to all horizontal corners of, and to all vertical layers within, the national territory and its population. In the cause of national democracy, it also manages non-class contradictions such as those of race and gender. It does not eliminate the class struggle, but it prepares society for the next necessary revolutionary step, which we refer to as socialism – the just state of the working class. The NDR is a rehearsal for a fuller kind of freedom.

The NDR is always historical, in the sense of being a practical piece of work carried out in changing objective conditions, by individuals acting through the structures that they have consciously created. This series will trace the world history of the NDR from the distant past up to the present, attempting to cover the salient features, if not all the detail.



**NDR in South Africa today**

The living history of the NDR in South Africa is that of the African National Congress, embodying the class alliance that is the functional heart of the NDR.

The main trade union federation COSATU, and organised labour in general, are vital components in the necessary

process of rendering the mass of the people into a self-conscious, free-willing historical subject. The working class leads and lends class-consciousness and a sense of purpose to the peasantry and to the petty-bourgeoisie. The working class is indispensable to the NDR.

But labour unions are not sufficient by themselves for the NDR; it requires an organised mass-democratic national liberation movement, which in our case is the ANC. It also requires a party of generalising professional revolutionaries. That party is the SACP.

The theoretical pattern of the NDR was set in 1920 by the Comintern, and immediately afterwards by the conference of “The Peoples of the East”. Before we come to these, we will look at the ancient history of the nation - its origins and its development as a human institution.

### **Triumph attracting the attention of Disaster**

Coming up to date, we will find, in parts of the ANC, that the NDR is treated as if it is a complete historical goal, or that it could reach stasis, or that it is an end in itself. We will expose such ideas to criticism.

The NDR story is one of the historic materialisation and triumph of an idea all around the world, but also of a new threat: that the NDR could be treated as a meaningless commonplace, taken for granted, or even worse, expropriated as a political weapon by the very forces that the NDR exists to oppose.

Unlike those who want to call closure on revolution and declare a static “National Democratic State” to be the final state, the communists know that history will insist on moving on beyond the NDR, towards the revolutionary end of class conflict itself, and towards the corresponding withering-away of the State altogether.

The challenge posed by this study of the NDR is therefore to learn how to carry out the National Democratic Revolution to its utmost possible extent, and then to be able to conceive of an even greater degree of freedom: a freedom that is beyond democracy and which is more than the mere crushing of a minority by a majority (which is the essence of democracy). True freedom is the ultimate goal.

As Lenin pointed out in “[The State and Revolution](#)”, written on the eve of Great October, 1917, the withering away of the state has to become a burning issue. Before we get to that point in our studies, we must, in the next post of this new course on the National Democratic Revolution, begin again from the beginning.

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